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**A SINGULAR MARRIAGE.**

**A SAILOR'S STORY.**

WE had been upon the Mediterranean station for about a year, when our commander ordered the ship to head for Marseilles. The excellent and safe harbor of this Liverpool of France invites with open arms, as it were, the various nations whose tonnage makes a highway of this famous inland sea. Here the flags of Italy, Portugal, England and America, mingled with those of the far East, forming a most interesting maritime picture.

In the busy streets of Marseilles one is jostled by Turks, Arabs, Spaniards, and the queer-looking sailors of the Grecian Archipelago, while jolly Yankee and British tars are equally conspicuous. Indeed, there is a perfect Babel of tongues saluting one's ears everywhere, owing to the heterogeneous mingling of nationalities, while the eye is dazzled by costumes as varied as a picture of the Roman carnival. The city is a sort of miniature Paris with an Oriental dash added.

I was then a young midshipman, and enjoyed the leave on shore in a foreign port with a boyish delight. There were six in our mess, and we managed to get shore leave so as to be together when it was possible to do so. This was the case one fine Sunday in the month of December, as mild and summer-like in the south of France as a New England May day.

The singular experience of one of our number I have often told since about the mess table or the camp fire, but have never put it into print.

We were strolling on the square known as Le Cours St. Louis, a sort of permanent flower market, where the women sit enthroned in tent-like stalls of wood, encircled by their bright, beautiful, and fragrant wares, while the manner of arranging the stalls, so that the vendor sits raised some six feet in the air, gave a novel effect to the scene.

We watched with special delight these black-eyed, black-haired, and rosy-cheeked girls, the blush of health in their faces fairly rivaling that of their scarlet flowers.—With busy fingers they arranged in dainty combinations the vivid and delicate colors, relieved by fresh green leaves and trailing vines of amilax, while we young middles joked pleasantly with them and bought fabulous quantities of bouquets.

While we were idling away the hour in Le Cours St. Louis with these roguish and petty flower vendors, we were all thrown into a state of amazement and curiosity by the appearance of a young girl of about seventeen, who rushed among us with a startling speed, and who, hardly pausing to regain her breath, said in excellent English:

"You are Americans, and, I trust, gentlemen. Is there one among you who will marry me?"

"We will all marry you," was the instant response, accompanied by hearty laughter.

"Ah, you are in sport, but I am in earnest. Who will marry me?"

There seemed to be no joke after all.—The girl was positively in earnest, and looked at one and all of us as coolly, yet earnestly, as possible.

"Here, Harry," said one who was rather a leader among us, and addressing Harry B.—"you want a wife," and he gave our comrade a sly push toward to girl.

For some singular reason, Harry took the matter much more in earnest than the rest of us, and regarded the new-comer with a most searching but respectful glance. Approaching her, he said:

"I do not know exactly what you mean, but I can understand by your expression of face that you are quite in earnest. Will you take my arm, and let us walk to one side?"

"Yes; but I have no time to lose," and, taking his arm, they walked away together.

We looked upon the affair as some well-prepared joke, but were a little annoyed at the non-appearance of Harry at our rendezvous on the quay. Our leave expired at sunset, and we dared not wait for him, as Captain D—— was a thorough disciplinarian, and we didn't care to provoke him and thus endanger our next Sunday's leave.

On board we went, therefore, leaving Harry on shore. When we reported, the question was of course asked where Midshipmen B—— was, to which query we could return no proper answer, as we really did not know. He knew perfectly well that we must all be at the boat-landing just before sunset. It was plain enough to us all that there was trouble brewing for our mesmate.

Harry did not make his appearance until the next day at noon, when he pulled to the ship in a shore boat, and, coming on board, reported at once to the captain, who stood upon the quarter-deck, and asked the privilege of a private interview.

The circumstances connected with the absence of Harry were very peculiar, and as he was one of the most correct fellows on board, his request was granted by the captain, who retired to his cabin, followed by the delinquent. After remaining with the commander for nearly an hour, he came out and joined us.

"What is the upshot of it, Harry?" we asked.

"Well, lads, I'm married—that's all."

"Married?" asked the mess, in one voice.

"Tied for life!" was the answer.

"Hard and fast?"

"Irrevocably."

"To that little craft you scudded away with?"

"Exactly. As good and pure a girl as ever lived," said Harry, earnestly.

"W-h-e-w!" whistled one and all.

"How did Old Neptune let you off?" we all eagerly inquired—that being the name the captain went by on board.

"He is hard on me," said Harry, seriously. "What do you think he demands, lads?"

"Can't say, what is it?"

"If I don't resign he will send me home in disgrace. That's his ultimatum."

"W-h-e-w!" again from all hands.

"Let's get up a petition for Harry," suggested one.

"It's of no use, lads, I know he means what he says. He has given me a while to think over it."

It was all up with Harry.

Captain D—— was a severe but an excellent officer, and he had only given the delinquent the alternative of resigning or being sent home in disgrace. The fact that he had got married, in the manner he described, in place of palliating matters, only aggravated the captain beyond measure. He declared it was a disgrace to the service, and a breach of propriety not to be overlooked.

Harry told us his story in a desultory manner, interrupted by many questions and ejaculations, but which we will put into a simple form for the convenience of the reader.

Julie Meurice was the orphan child of a merchant, who had been of high-standing during his life, and who left a handsome fortune to endow his daughter on her wedding day, or if not married before, she was to receive the property on coming to the age of twenty years. Her mother had died in her infancy, and the father, when she was ten years of age, placed her in a convent to be educated, where she remained until his death, which occurred suddenly, six months previous to the period of our sketch.

After his death Julie became the ward of her uncle, by the tenor of her father's will, and the period of her educational course having just closed at the convent. Hubert Meurice, the uncle, brought her home to his family circle. Madame Meurice, it appears, was a scheming, calculating woman, and knowing that Julie would be an heiress, she tried every way to promote her intimacy with her own son, who was an uncouth, and ignorant youth of eighteen years, without one attractive point in his character.

Hubert Meurice, the uncle of Julie, was a sea captain, whose calling carried him much away from his home. During his absence his wife treated Julie with the utmost tyranny, even keeping her locked up in her room for days together, telling her that when she would consent to marry her son, Hubert, she would release her, and do all she could to make her happy. But to this Julie could not consent. Imprisonment even was preferable to accepting her awkward and repulsive cousin.

One day she overheard a conversation between her aunt and her hopeful son, wherein the mystery of her treatment was solved.

The boy asked his mother what was the use of bothering and importuning Julie so.

"If she doesn't want to marry me, mother, drop the matter. I like Julie, and she would make me a nice little wife, but I don't want her against her will."

"You are a fool," said the mother.—"You know nothing about the matter. Her father's will endows her with a fortune at her marriage, even if it be at seventeen, just her present age. At twenty she receives the fortune at any rate. Now don't you see that if you marry her we are all fixed for life?"

"Does Julie know about the money?" he asked.

"No, of course not."

"It's a little sharp on her," said the boy.

"I'm looking out for you," said the mother.

her aunt would hesitate at nothing. The poor child feared her beyond description, and had yielded to her in everything, save this one purpose of her marriage with Hubert.

Julie was a very gentle girl; one upon whom her aunt could impose with impunity. She had no idea of asserting her rights, much less of standing up for them. But she was thoroughly frightened now, and resolved to escape at any cost from the tyranny which bound her. No fate could be worse, she thought, than to be compelled to marry that coarse, vulgar and repulsive creature.

Yes, she would run away at once. The poor child—for she was little more—had not asked herself where she should go.—She had no other relations that she knew of in the world, and the isolated life she had always led had caused her to form no intimacies, or even to make friends with those of her own age. Indeed, with this prospective fortune, yet she was virtually alone and unprotected, and without a relation whom she did not look upon as her enemy.

The next day after Julie had heard this information was Sunday, the gayest day of the week in Marseilles, and, fortunately, Julie succeeded in making her escape from her aunt's house. Still undecided where to go, and in her desperation feared that at any moment she might be seized and carried back, she had wandered into the flower-market, where she came upon us as already described.

As she explained to Harry afterward, she was intent only upon escape, and believed this to be her last chance. When she saw a half-dozen young Americans, whom seemed perfectly respectable, the idea that positive safety lay only in marriage dawned upon her, and she actually ran toward us, as we have related, the moment the thought developed itself.

Harry became more and more impressed with Julie's story as they walked along, while he was delighted by her innocent beauty and manifested refinement. It was all like a dream, almost too romantic for truth. Our "fate" sometimes comes to us in this singular fashion, he thought.—"There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood leads on to fortune." Suddenly he turned to her and said:

"Dare you trust me with your happiness?"

She looked at him thoughtfully, with her soft, pleading eyes. Her brain was very busy; she remembered what awaited her at home, what had driven her thence, and then, in reply to his sober question, she put both of her hands into his with child-like trust.

They wandered on. Julie had always plenty of money in her purse, and they strolled into a little chapel on their way, where they found a young clergyman, who could not resist their request to marry them, backed by ten golden Napoleons, and so, though reluctantly and advising proper delay, he performed the marriage ceremony, aided by the sexton and his wife, who each received a Napoleon.

As an inducement, Harry had also told the clergyman that he was just going to sea, and that he must be married before he sailed, that not even one hour was to be lost.

"Perhaps I am saving the girl's honor," said the young clergyman, as he finally consented.

Julie came out of the chapel the wife of Harry B., who went with her to the Hotel du Louvre. From here he sent a pressing note to the American consul, who came to him early the next morning, and by the earnest persuasion of Harry, the consul agreed to take the young wife to his own house, until matters should be settled as it regarded their future course. In the consul's house Julie found a pleasant and safe retreat for the time being.

Whatever might be said with regard to the propriety of the young folks' conduct; it could not be undone. They were irrevocably united as husband and wife. Harry was forced, however, to resign his commission. By the aid of the consul, Julie's rights in relation to her fortune under her father's will were fully realized, and she came almost immediately with her young husband to America.

Harry B., by means of proper influence, once more entered the navy, the second time as lieutenant, and now wears a captain's epaulets.

I know of no more happy domestic circle than that which resulted from this marriage. It sign.

A correspondent of the Erie, Penna. Observer, sends to that journal the following anecdote; Mrs. J. has for some time past been the owner of a fine Esquimaux dog. A few months ago, Mrs. J. became the mother of a beautiful little girl, of whom the dog at first was very jealous.—His better nature, however, soon asserted itself and became very fond of the child. A few weeks ago baby was crying loud and long. Doggy came up stairs in evident distress of spirit, whined in answer to the child's cry; but finally, as if a sudden thought had startled him, trotted quickly down stairs. He presently returned with a bone, well poked, of course, in his mouth, which standing on his hind legs, he gravely presented to the baby.